

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressmen Jim Costa (D-Fresno) and Dennis Cardoza (D-Merced) introduced a bill that will expedite the federal government’s ability to build needed water projects in the San Joaquin Valley by lowering or eliminating required matching funds provided by state or local government. Any area of California that has been designated a disaster area by the state Governor during calendar year 2009 will be eligible. Also, any part of the state that has been identified by the U.S. Drought Monitor in the last 24 months as experiencing severe, extreme or exceptional drought will qualify.

“Fighting for water and improving our local economy are the two most important issues for me, and this legislation tackles both,” Costa said. “First, by waiving or changing the state and local cost-share for water projects, we can build them much faster and save our localities money. Second, immediate infrastructure investment from the federal level will create good construction jobs for our Valley, and immediately put people back to work. It’s a double win for our farms and cities throughout our Valley.”

“Valley farmers continue to bear the brunt of misguided policies that blame pumping as the sole reason for the decline of species in the Delta,” said Congressman Cardoza. “As I’ve said many times, we need to look at all the factors in the Delta, get the pumps back on and get water flowing to our farmers. However, until that happens I believe we must also pursue every realistic solution to this problem. This legislation is a practical means of improving our water infrastructure in the Valley, directing federal resources to communities that are in the most need and getting our workforce back on the job.”

The Secretary may use funds provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 or funds appropriated by Congress through fiscal year 2012 for any required non-Federal share of project already funded by the federal government and are located in California. In order to qualify, projects will need to meet at least one of three criteria.

â— It would need to be previously identified as a project that makes progress toward creating a more reliable water supply in California and restore the Delta.

â— Increase water management flexibility.

â— Reduce impacts on environmental resources from water projects operated by the State Department of Water Resources, State Department of Fish and Game, Bureau of Reclamation, and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

“As I have said before, California’s water crisis has been caused by numerous layers of regulations and a lack of rain that hinder vital water movement to our Valley farmers and farm communities. While this legislation is not the ultimate solution, water projects are another critical tool we can use to move, store, and conserve water in our state,” Costa said.